

# COMPLETE AIR CREW

Pilot	Hair, James M.	0435774	1st Lt.
Copilot	Miers, Lonnie L.	0725333	1st Lt.
Nav.	Yonich, Alexander	0659949	1st Lt.
omb.	Cook, Emmet E.	0725410	1st Lt.
UpTurGun	Patriquin, Louis F.	19066157	T/Sgt
LoTurGun	Seman, Andrew	32175577	S/Sgt
W. Gun.	McLaughlin, Jimmie G.	19055707	Sgt
T. Tun.	Upton, Douglas J.	19028880	S/Sgt
Rad Op	Byrnes, Ervin N.	19006254	Sgt

Airplane # -- 42-5179      Type -- B-17F      Doing Flying Fortress

Mission -- High altitude bombing mission to Palermo Docks and Shipping, Palermo Harbor, Sicily

Date -- 22 Mar 1943

Hit by flak over target. Lost altitude. Attacked by enemy fighters. Enveloped by flames, engine exploded, ship broke up in mid-air.

Three (3) parachutes seen to open. Possibly two more.

Ship last seen off coast of Sicily between Cape Galbo and Cape San Vito

No search conducted.

All crew members on flying pay status

Above information extracted from SR&D Case No. 580

Note-- For additional information see confidential letter dated 22 Jan 44. from AGO to CG, NATO, US Army, subject: "Information Regarding Personnel Reported Missing in Action", and nine indorsements thereon, File: AG 704 (22 Jan 44) PC-S

Twin Bridges, Montana  
April 7, 1947

War Department  
The Adjutant General's Office  
Washington 25, D. C.

Dear Sir:

In reference to the named officers and enlisted man of my crew,

Hair, James M.	0435775	First Lieutenant
Miers, Lonnie L., Jr.	0725333	" "
Byrnes, Ervin E.	19006254	Sergeant

I do not know what has become of them.

We were making our run over the target. All of a sudden the plane was full of fire; then everything went black.

I regained consciousness falling through the air and pulled my rip cord. While floating down to earth, I saw only one parachute below me.

My parachute was badly ripped and I came down very fast. When I hit the ground I lost consciousness. I came to in an Italian naval hospital. I did not see or hear of any of my crew again.

In my opinion and to the best of my knowledge, I do not know what did happen to the above named officers and enlisted man.

I would like to know what happened to the named officers and enlisted men also to my crew:

First Lieutenant	Yovich	Navigator
" " Cook	Cook	Bombardier
Staff Sergeant	Upton	Tail Gunner
" "	Seaman	Ball Turret
Tech. "	Patriquin	Engineer

Maybe if I could get in contact with them they could give me more information. I would like very much to have their home addresses so I can get in contact with them.

Very truly yours,

/s/ Jimmie G. McLaughlin  
/t/ JIMMIE G. MCLAUGHLIN

AGFC-CR 704

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL  
Washington 25, D. C.

In Reply Refer To:  
QMGYG 293  
Unk. (Misc.)  
Palermo, Sicily

6 September 1946

Capt Emmet E. Cook  
2201 Market Street  
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Capt Cook:

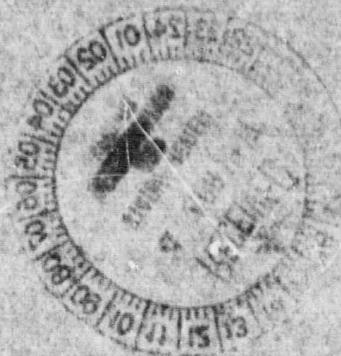
In reply to your request for information regarding crew members, this office wishes to advise you that Douglas J. Upton Jimmie G. McLaughlin and Alexander Yonych were evacuated to the United States. However, Louis F. Patriquin and Andrew Seaman were killed. Their remains were recovered at San Vito, Sicily and are interred in the 2nd AD Cemetery, Palermo, Sicily, where the three crew members mentioned in our previous letter to you are also buried.

Your prompt reply was greatly appreciated.

FOR THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL:

Sincerely yours,

JAMES C. MacFARLAND  
Major, QMC  
Assistant



QM GENERAL

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August 12, 1946

If you can give me any information about the following men, it will be very much appreciated: Douglas Upton, tail gunner; MacLaughlin, waist gunner; Patriquin, upper turret and engineer; Andrew Seaman, lower turret gunner. And can you tell me where the bodies of the other crew members were found and when?

If I can be of any further service, please feel free to call on me at any time.

Sincerely yours,

EMMET E. COOK  
Capt., ORC

2201 Market Street  
Fort Worth, Texas



August 12, 1946

Quartermaster General  
Washington 25, D.C.

Refer to: QMGYC 293  
Unk. 2-65  
Palermo, Sicily

Dear Sir:

In answer to Major MacFarland's letter of 6 August 1946, I am sorry to say that I am unable to give you any information which might enable you to identify the woman found with the bodies of three of my crew members.

Following is a brief synopsis of what happened as far as I know or can remember: About four minutes after leaving the target (Palermo) we received a direct hit in the left wing. It was only a few seconds before that wing came off and as a result the ship went into a violent spin. I was thrown next to Lt. Miers near the forward escape hatch, which we were unable to open. The last thing I remember is seeing a lot of fire and experiencing the discomfort of not being able to move. Here I either passed out from lack of oxygen (we were between 20,000 and 30,000 ft.) or fright, for the next thing I can recall is descending very quietly down in my chute. I noticed bits of debris all around me and two chutes below. I landed near a sea coast villa somewhere between Palermo and Triponi, along with two of our Sgt.'s, Upton and MacLaughlin, tailgunner and waistgunner, both of whom received serious injuries. Lt. Yonich was high above us in another chute but we did not see him until later on in the hospital at Triponi Airfield.

I had always thought the wreckage hit in the sea, but evidently it did not. But I do remember an Italian soldier pointing to the side of a mountain and saying something about a "fleiger" and it is possible that he could have been pointing to the spot where our ship hit. If so, it was not near a house or village, but against the side of a mountain with very steep and rugged cliffs. It may be possible that the plane crashed on the unknown woman but it doesn't seem very probable. I do not believe this woman was in the airplane at any time.

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WAR DEPARTMENT  
OFFICE OF THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL  
Washington 25, D.C.

In Reply Refer To:  
QMGYG 293  
Unk. 2-65,  
(Palermo) Sicily

Address Reply To THE  
QUARTERMASTER GENERAL

6 August 1946

Mr. Emmet E. Cook  
2201 Market Street,  
Fort Worth, Texas

Dear Mr. Cook:

An investigation is being conducted by this office to determine, if possible, the identity of an Unknown Woman, whose body was recovered with three deceased crew members, 1st Lts, James H. Hair, Lonnie Miers and Sgt. Ervin E. Byrnes, killed 22 March 1943 as the result of the crash of their airplane.

As you were a crew member of this plane on the date of the crash, it is believed you may be able to supply information which will furnish the identity of this woman. Any information which you can furnish will be greatly appreciated by this office.

A self-addressed envelope, which requires no postage, is inclosed for your convenience.

FOR THE QUARTERMASTER GENERAL:

Sincerely yours,

JAMES C. MacFARLAND  
Major, QMC  
Assistant

Incl  
Envelope



APR 7 1947  
2 April 1947

War Department  
The Adjutant General's Office  
Washington 25, D. C.

Att: Maj. Gen. Edward F. Witsell  
The Adjutant General of the Army

Ref: AGPO-CR 704 (27 March 1947)

Dear Sir:

In reply to your inquiry of 27 March 1947, the following is a synopsis of what I believe happened on the 22 March 1943. Also, you will find enclosed copies of my earlier correspondence with the Quartermaster General's Office, which will possibly be of some help to you.

A few minutes after leaving the target we received a direct hit in the left wing. I believe it was flak, but there is a possibility that it could have been 20 mm. I did not notice any fire at this time, but I did smell smoke a few seconds before Lt. Hair gave the orders to bail out, but thought it was fumes from gun fire. At this time we were very busy with fighter attacks. When the word came from Lt. Hair over the inter-comm - "Sorry, fellows, but you will have to bail out." for some unknown reason I grabbed a fire extinguisher and headed for the bomb bay. On the way I noticed for the first time that we had a hell of a fire between #1 and #2, which convinced me there was no need of a fire extinguisher. I met Lt. Miers, co-pilot, at the forward escape hatch - we were unable to open this hatch with the emergency release. We were both stamping on it, when, I assume, the left wing blew off, because the airplane went into a sudden and most violent spin, pinning Lt. Miers and myself to the floor. My vision was pretty well blacked out, but I do recall seeing a lot of blue and red fire. The next thing I remember is descending very quietly in my chute.

With regard to the members of our crew mentioned in your letter, I am quite sure that 1st Lt. James M. Hair, first pilot, was still at the controls when the ship blew up. 1st. Lt. Lonnie L. Miers, Jr., co-pilot, was trapped with me near the forward escape hatch. Lt. Alex Yonych, navigator, was still at his guns, and I have no idea where Sergeant Patriquin, upper turret, was at the time; no one alive today saw him. Later in the hospital Sergeant Upton informed me that just before the ship

2-The Adjutant General's Office - 2 April 1947  
AGPO-CR 704 (27 March 1947)

went into a spin, he saw Sergeant McLaughlin and Sergeant Byrnes helping Sergeant Seaman out of the lower turret gun position. Byrnes was radio operator, gunner and McLaughlin was waist gunner. Sergeant Upton was tail gunner.

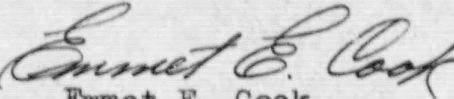
I landed near Sergeants McLaughlin and Upton; both of whom sustained serious injuries. McLaughlin had a crushed right arm, and I believe his back was broken. Upton had a deep head wound. From the appearance of their physical injuries, I assume they were blown clear of the airplane. We were taken to a local jail somewhere between Palermo and Triponi, where the Italians administered very poor first aid to my Sergeants (if you could call it first aid). They treated them like dogs and I feel sure that both men would have died from infection if it had not been for the German medical attention they received three days later on Triponi German Airfield.

Having seen only two chutes, I assumed the rest of our crew went down with the wreckage, so I was quite surprised when they brought in Lt. Yonych the first night. He was pretty well beaten up and did not know how he got out.

When we were first captured, we talked very little of the incident because of the constant watch of the Italians. But later in Stalag Luft III, Lt. Yonych and myself discussed it quite frequently and feel safe in assuming that 1st Lts. James M. Hair, Lonnie L. Miers, Jr., Sergeants Byrnes, Andrew Seaman, and Louis F. Patriquin went down with the wreckage, although we saw none of them after the plane blew up, nor did we see the wreckage.

I hope the above information is what you desire and if you can give me the current address of Upton and McLaughlin, it will be very much appreciated.

Yours very truly,

  
Emmet E. Cook  
Capt. ORC

EEC:jt

Encl: Recent Correspondence with  
Quartermaster General's Office



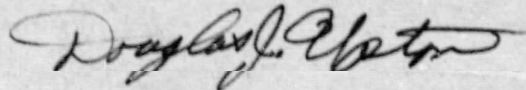
AGPO-CR 705 (27 Mar 47)

(2)

I am quite certain, though not positive that, owing to their position in the ship, Lt. Hair and Lt. Miers and Sgt. Byrnes were either killed instantly or knocked unconscious to such a degree that it would make it impossible for them to have opened their parachutes in time. The explosion had such force that it completely demolished all of the ship except a small piece of the tail section.

If there is any other information you wish, I shall be glad to give it if it is in my knowledge.

Respectfully yours,

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read "Douglas J. Upton". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Douglas" being more prominent.

Douglas J. Upton

135 West 93rd Street  
New York City, New York

372  
AGPO-CR 704 (27 Mar 47)

April 9, 1947

Major General Edward F. Witsell  
The Adjutant General of the Army  
Washington 25, D.C.

APR 14 1947

Dear Sir:

On March 17, 1943, the Flying Fortress of which Lt. James M. Hair, Lt. Lonnie L. Miers Jr., Sgt. Ervin E. Byrnes and I were crew members, was on an assigned mission over Palermo Harbor, Sicily. We had completed the bomb run, closed bomb bay doors and had set our course for home base. Approximately five minutes after dropping our bomb load, our Fortress was hit by flak, between number one and two engines in the trailing edge of the wing, setting afire the left main fuel tank. Our pilot, Lt. Hair, gave orders to parachute out. Immediately, Lt. Miers, our co-pilot, counter-ordered not to parachute out. He, being on the right side of the flight deck could not see the extent of the wing damage, thereby believing it possible to make it back to the base, or at least out of enemy territory. I called into Lt. Hair, asking for final orders and he again said to parachute out. Therefore, I turned around from my tail position, buckled on my parachute and started for ball turret position for the purpose of aiding the ball turret man with his parachute. I arrived about midway up in the waist when the ship went into a flat spin, the centrifical force holding me to the floor of the ship. After a few seconds the plane straightened out again and I got up to help the ball turret man. He had just turned his turret up and opened the escape hatch when the plane exploded, blowing me free of the ship.

Approximately two minutes had elapsed from the time Lt. Hair gave the first order to parachute out until the time that the plane exploded. I delayed opening my parachute until about 10,000 feet and then made my descent, landing on the beach. There were four of us out of the entire crew that landed in the near vicinity: myself, Lt. Cook, bombardier, Lt. Yanick, navigator and a Sergeant whose name I do not know since he was a replacement gunner for that mission. This Sergeant received wounds that could have been fatal. The Italians took him to a hospital. That is the last I heard of him.